

Book Review: Everyday Feminist Research Praxis. Edited by Domitilla Oliveri and Koen Leurs

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The edited collection **Everyday Feminist Research Praxis** aims to link feminist theory and methodology much more closely. Using case studies, the book's contributors all make connections between their theories and their everyday feminist research practice, which include ethnographies, and social media and image analysis. **Olivia Mason** recommends this book as one which provides a plethora of different ways of doing feminist research, and one that has something to offer both feminist and non-feminist researchers alike.

Everyday Feminist Research Praxis. Edited by Domitilla Oliveri and Koen Leurs. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. August 2014.

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Few books attempt to link theory and methodology; often the two are distanced and seen as separate realms of study. Yet increasingly as researchers we are told the two are intrinsically linked. 'Everyday Feminist Research Praxis' begins with this provocation that in order to understand gender we must research in gendered ways and break down this distance. Editors Domitilla Oliveri and Koen Leurs argue the everyday is being increasingly studied as a scale of analysis and that we should complement this feminist perspective with a focus on feminist methodologies; maintaining that the everyday, and feminist scale of analysis '*is a field of experimentation, of possibility*' (pg xxv). The methodology possibilities for feminist researchers have not yet been fully explored and in the words of the editors: '*all the contributors to this volume make explicit connections between the theories they explore and their everyday feminist research practice.*' (pg xxvi). This is the feminist research praxis; or as Eline Van Uden defines it 'doing feminist theory'. The contributors are well placed to do this too; all emerging from the Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies (NOG); this book is comprised of a series of case studies amassed from established researchers in the group to students on their masters programmes and PhD students. Although methodological in focus, the book helpfully organises itself into four sections, along four conceptual knots: space/time, affectivity, public/private and technological mediation; providing a useful platform for the contributors to link their methodology to theory.



For many of the feminist researchers contributing to this volume, of key importance to them is their role in the research process. In Uden's chapter on fashion modelling, her past as a fashion model is crucial to her analysis of the fashion industry. '*I want to situate my intervention in the knowledge and insights drawn from my experiences in the modelling industry*' (pg78). As a result of this, for Uden a model is not merely a model but a visual presence whose job is: '*to stimulate and transmit affective energies on unconscious levels*' (pg75). Uden's methodology is image analysis but particularly the bringing of her experiences and knowledge into this process. This blurring of the lines between researcher and the research object is fascinating; particularly the way it can uncover new understandings of emotion. Through her own reflections, Uden argues that emotion and affect are crucial to the modelling process. Emotions being the embodied responses our bodies make while affect relates to the energies which transmit emotions and the unknown registers between bodies and objects which drive emotions. Using an example of affect from modelling: '*successful models can be exquisite communicators without saying a word*'. In sum, Uden's theory that modelling is about emotion and affective means of communication is proved by her methodological process. Through analysing photographs in such a way, Uden uncovers other ways these images

transmit meaning, and as a result thickens our understanding of the role of models.



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Goda Klumbyte takes this embodied methodology approach further in her chapter on the porn industry. Through her own experiences of watching porn and masturbating to it, Klumbyte's embodied approach interrogates the practices of porn. By contrasting with methodological approaches looking at the images of porn, Klumbyte argues that porn is an embodied practice and not just about representations. To clarify Klumbyte's point, focusing purely on images of porn risks confining understandings to those based on representing the body. Klumbyte argues that we have embodied responses to porn; our bodies work with technology in porn and reflecting on her creation of pornographic images *'the image is produced by me and, as any digital image, fundamentally malleable and susceptible to further re-reproductions'* (pg264). Those who focus only on the images of porn often view it as reductive, representation, and about men's power over women, failing to acknowledge that interactions with porn are active and embodied. Klumbyte further makes link the connections between our bodies and the virtual world in porn. Through the use of porn in virtual spaces, we are having intimate connections with technology through porn and we are *'intimately wired with technology'* (pg271). The whole process of porn is about mediation with technology. I find most fruitful, however, Klumbyte's decision to involve her experiences of porn in her research process and this is where the feminist research praxis as a methodological tool becomes evident. Klumbyte argues that *'my embodied response comes only from the content or a fantasy that is represents'* pg263. We can be surprised by the reactions of our bodies and when investigating an issue such as porn, it seems right that we cannot truly understand the relationship it has with our bodies without thinking through the relationships between representation and embodiment. As Klumbyte asks *'what happens to my own body and the way I live it out when it becomes one flash of flesh in the abundance of online porn?'* (pg274). Only through this methodology can such questions come to fruition.

As a researcher, this book provides a plethora of different ways that feminist research can be done. This book comes from a wealth of experience and the range of different research being carried out in NOG is clear. This book is usable, with short chapters, each presenting an entirely different methodological approach. The result enables numerous researchers to be heard, there is a particular emphasis on including the voices of new researchers, and a wide range of case studies to be shared. This book contains amongst its methodologies: ethnographies in a variety of contexts; textual analysis of social media, and fiction; and analysis of photographs and interviews. Particularly useful, however, was this book's ability to consistently link theory to methodology and prove that our theoretical stand point should drive the methodology we chose. This book can be picked up, put down, pondered over, and offers numerous veins of inspiration. In sum the emphasis on methodology and praxis is a motivating provocation and offers something for both non-feminist and feminist researchers alike.

Olivia Mason is currently undertaking an ESRC funded PhD at Durham University. Her research interests lie in geopolitics, space, power, and feminist methodologies. Previously she has studied the role of tour guides in shaping the tourist gaze in post-conflict Bosnia; and the role of female blogging in Palestine as offering counter geographies and emotional narratives of place. Her current research explores tourism in Palestine; particularly questions around knowledge production, heritage, and power. [Read more reviews by Olivia.](#)

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